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The Importance of Being Nobody: Egotism at the Vanishing Point

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JANUARY 1989

BEAT CRITIQUE

JANUARY - 1989

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING NOBODY:

EGOTISM AT THE VANISHING POINT

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody too?
Then there's a pair of
us- Don't tell!
They'd banish us, you
know

How dreary to be
somebody!
how public like a frog
To tell your name
the livelong day
To an admiring bog!
Fresh Emily D.

Long before poets
learned to punctuate
their readings with
flatulent pyrotechnics.
Before they discovered
the romance of substance
abuse, the art of self-
promotion or how to
write grants, I like to
think the sat scribbling
in squalid attics and
didn't expect much.
There was, presumably,
also a time when painters
and composers had humble
aspirations; before some
of them began

accumulating more money
than GOD selling canvases
and vinyl.

OH! LAWDY MAMMA! Can you
possibly imagine a world
without fat headed
artistes?

Nowadays it seems
everyone can afford to
dabble in megalomania.
Even the poor and
obscure lodged in the
bowels of the BEATNIK
LEAGUE find time to
gaze at their reflections
and whisper "C'est MOI!"
How long could it before
we see dilettante bag
ladies?

Looking around I find
the unavoidable
conclusion is that..
**UNIVERSAL FABULOUSNESS
HAS ENVELOPED THE
WORLD!**

And now that EVERYBODY
fancies themselves
SOMEBODY where can we
turn to figure our
creative selves against
a background of so much
colorful delusion?

I, MYSELF, have spent
years hiding from the
ever growing hoard of
PERSONAE FAVOLOZO in the
hope of somehow
retaining the sense that
I wuz somebody.

Communities of artistes
arranged in trendy
urban ghettos and Art
Departments filled me
with dread. There, I
found a horrifying
consistency in the
**ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY
CLICHES** employed
wholesale for self-
delineation.

If I were cornered in a
SOHO elevator and asked
whether or not I was an
artist, I would cringe
pathetically and deny my
accuser: fearing that
the truth would turn me
into a wall paper motif,
repeating with horrible
accuracy throughout the
staggering lengths of
humanities hallways.
Soon, as a matter of
psychic survival, I

became COMMITTED TO BEING NOBODY. When I first stumbled upon AS220 in 1985, I had wandered so deeply into the realm of anonymous esthetics, that my idea of artistic communion was exchanging technical tips with a jailhouse tattoo artist.

But, now at the BEATNIK LEAGUE I could spend hours flaunting my psychic intricacies and indulging in the affectation of heroic postures and their attendant delusions. Indeed, I soon discovered that these common delusions were the threads holding this little bohemian tapestry together. So, it was, like, rilly fun... for about a day and a half. Then, of course, I started noticing those little cliches... a bit more rough hewn than before, but believe me, compared to the TATTOO CLUB at SUPER MAX, them beatniks seemed like some serious sophistocats.

Happily, this time, my exposure to "ART WHIRLED WALLPAPER" was slightly less traumatic. You see, since I made my debut on the ENFANT TERRIBLE CIRCUIT, I have actually learned a few things! One of them is the fact that ANALYSIS, or more specifically the aspect of analysis that involves the vigorous application of CATEGORIES, is one of the most aggressive modes of being known to man. And thus it is possible, when threatened with psychic invisibility, to more or less EXAMINE REALITY into SUBMISSION. If I asserted myself by critical, categorical presence, I could figure myself against the background of creative stereotype as well as if I indulged myself in blatant displays of ARTISTIC SENSIBILITY CLICHES. (I'm not sure, one may be as bad as the other)

But wait. Before we take that dizzying plunge into the ink of my subjective values, allow

me to define one or two of our (my) terms. EGOTISM, here-in is not to be confused with ARROGANCE, ATTITUDE or any of the popular manifestations of NEO-FREUDIAN SELFHOOD. Nooooo, HERE at (in) the BEAT CRITIQUE, "Egotism" Connotes nothing less than the very mechanism of human suffering... that which permits us to draw a membrane around our thoughts and feelings and there-by assert that we are somehow discrete, unique, and separate from the world around us... the moment that we indulge ourselves in the delusion that we are independent, the gesture which seals our fates and insures the inevitability of our final, four dimensional endpoint. An affliction quite indistinguishable from the malady referred to as P.M.S. ...actually, it's worse. More like P.M.S. multiplied by itself. So, for our (my) purposes we may apply the following formula...

$$E = p.m.s.^2$$

P.M.S. factors
TALENT and TEMPERAMENT
multiplied by each other
give rise to the odious
phenomenon we'll call...
MISTER E.

I first began measuring P.M.S. at AS220 very early in its history. From the beginning I began to notice that each artist went through a similar self-indulgent ritual in taking over the stage. Transforming the artistic occasion into a territorial ritual of reptillian simplicity. Although these "Performances" are supposedly mere preparation for the fully fleshed "acts" I've found them more consistantly intriguing than the "art" proffered for our consideration. With each new exhibit, every performance, and each new artiste to take the stage, I'm confronted with yet another setting for the same old motif...

C'est moi WITH MUSIC!
C'est moi ACAPELLA
C'est moi in a giant puppet suit.
C'est moi IN THE NUDE!
C'est moi behind a silken veil
C'est moi with colored lights and a soundtrack of hyper-clittoral yodeling.
C'est moi ACOUSTIC
C'est moi ELECTRIC!
C'est moi-the creator whose perfect orchestrations of a thousand subtle details requires as many refined inquiries....
"ARE THESE LIGHTS TOO BLUE FOR MY MYSTIC MOON PHASE PAINTINGS?"
"Is my drum positioned at the optimal point on the stage?" "Did I spend enough time introducing the audience to the hidden intricacies of my genre?" "Did they understand the historical significance of my repertoire?" "Was it clear what an exquisitely refined sensibility I possess?" "was it loud enough?" "was my hair alright?" "Is there sugar in this?"

No matter what kind of talents mount the stage it seems somehow that P.M.S. can render any performance insignificant. On many occasions I've lobbied in favor of a P.M.S. FESTIVAL at AS220 featuring the very grandest practitioners of on stage attitude. But, for the moment it is merely my own personal fantasy. In the final analysis it seems to me that the interplay between the P.M.S. factors in any one artist determine whether or not their work functions independent of its creation or whether it exists as a prop to support their psychic pretenses. The myths of fabulousness suggest that big egos equal big talents. But the truth is... Big egos REQUIRE big talents, just to break even. Teeny egos are always preferable. Because P.M.S. is the only aspect of creative endeavour where MORE is ALWAYS LESS.

PETER JOHN BOYLE
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